



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

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December 14, 2023

Design Review Committee

Meeting Minutes

Approved March 7, 2024 as Amended

This meeting of the Design Review Committee was held in Conference Room B, 2nd floor of Town Hall.

Members Present: Amy Poretsky, Chair; Lisa Maselli.

Others Present: Laurie Connors, Planning Director; Robert Frederico, Building Inspector and Zoning Enforcement Officer.

The meeting was called to order at 8:35am.

Discussion of Proposed Sign Bylaw Changes

Discussion was continued from last month's meeting regarding proposed sign bylaw changes for the Annual Town Meeting in 2024. The size of signs allowed by right in the highway district needs to be adjusted as there have been many variances requested in Northborough Crossing plaza; 10% of the wall size or 250 ft was decided.

There was a discussion about projecting/blade signs, awnings and awning signs and window signs, in the downtown to go in conjunction with the Downtown Revitalization Plan. Ms. Maselli asked about awnings that were destroyed and falling apart. Mr. Frederico said that would fall under the construction and maintenance portion of the bylaw. Currently, the way the bylaw reads, window signs are only allowed as temporary signs for a special event. Permanent window signs that cover 10% of the window will be added to the bylaw.

Ms. Poretsky likes how Hudson downtown window signs look and would like to do the same; they look etched, painted or have wording with a translucent background. Vinyl signs on buildings are considered banners and only temporary. It was discussed that there should be a maximum amount of signs allowed per business since we are adding 3 more types of signs.

Permitting of signs was next discussed. To avoid having to charge fees [associated with advertising of public hearings], Ms. Connors suggested that this committee perform that review and submit advisory recommendations to the Building Inspector, beginning with certain types of signs in the Downtown Business district only; later, after having gone through that initial process, discussion can be held regarding incorporating that process to other parts of Town. The business wouldn't need a special permit, there would only be a sign permit, which would be a \$25 fee.

Businesses that were out of compliance needed to be informed of the current bylaws. Mr. Frederico suggested a letter to go out to the businesses. Ms. Maselli said she would help draft letter and make brochure to hand out.

Conversation followed regarding proposed amendments to the Design Review bylaw.

Appointment to the Design Review Committee was discussed next, with conversation turning to preferred qualifications and relative experience of those on the committee. Discussion followed. Ms. Connors said that individuals with professional design expertise are needed on the committee, otherwise the committee should be disbanded as they will not have technical expertise above and beyond that held by the permitting authorities. Ms. Connors asked about adding Historical background as one of the possible criteria for a resident and the committee agreed. Mr. Frederico said that the Planning Board, as the Appointing Authority, should be vetting the individual candidates to ensure that they are qualified and appropriate. He asked how often that Board reappoints; Ms. Connors said that since she has worked for the Town, new appointments have been made only when there is a vacancy. Terms are three years in length.

Review of Minutes from 9.14.23, 9.22.23, 10.12.23, 10.19.23, 11.30.23

Tabled to the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15am.

Respectfully Submitted by
Michelle Cilley, Board Secretary